

**Revised March 10, 2006**

***2005-2006 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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*U.S. Department of Education*

**Cover Sheet**

Type of School: (Check all that apply) ☐ Elementary ☒ Middle ☐ High ☐ K-12 ☐ Charter

Name of Principal Mrs. M. Karen Labutta

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name South Fayette Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3700 Old Oakdale Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

McDonald

PA

15057-2580

City

State

Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Allegheny

State School Code Number\* 103028703-000007490

Telephone ( 412 ) 221-4542 ext. 236

Fax ( 724 ) 693-0860

Website/URL www.southfayette.org

E-mail labutta@southfayette.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Linda B. Hippert

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name South Fayette School District

Tel. ( 412 ) 221-4542 ext. 413

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Leonard Fornella

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

**[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]**

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2005-2006 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2000 and has not received the 2003, 2004, or 2005 *No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools Award*.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:
 

_ 1 _	Elementary schools
_ 1 _	Middle schools
_ _ _	Junior high schools
_ 1 _	High schools
_ _ _	Other
_ 3 _	TOTAL
2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$11,307\*  
 \*Includes debt service due to increased enrollment; all buildings are new or renovated since 2002  
  
 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$10,283

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 

<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban or large central city
<input type="checkbox"/>	Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Suburban
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small city or town in a rural area
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural
4. 9 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?
5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK				7	63	75	138
K				8	75	81	156
1				9			
2				10			
3				11			
4				12			
5	62	71	133	Other			
6	84	68	152				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →							579

*[Throughout the document, round numbers to avoid decimals.]*

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- |             |                                  |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>94</u>   | % White                          |
| <u>4</u>    | % Black or African American      |
| <u>0</u>    | % Hispanic or Latino             |
| <u>2</u>    | % Asian/Pacific Islander         |
| <u>0</u>    | % American Indian/Alaskan Native |
| <b>100%</b> | <b>Total</b>                     |

Use only the five standard categories in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of the school.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 5 %

[This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.]

<b>(1)</b>	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	12
<b>(2)</b>	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	16
<b>(3)</b>	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	28
<b>(4)</b>	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	579
<b>(5)</b>	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	.0483
<b>(6)</b>	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5%

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 0 %  
2 Total Number Limited English Proficient  
 Number of languages represented: 2  
 Specify languages: Polish and Trinidad Vernacular English

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %  
 Total number students who qualify: 64

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 8 %  
44 Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>4</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>5</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>25</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>7</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

**Number of Staff**

	<u><b>Full-time</b></u>	<u><b>Part-Time</b></u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>      </u>
Classroom teachers*	<u>38</u>	<u>3</u>
*Includes Core Academic, Special Education and Special Area teachers		
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>4</u>	<u>      </u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>7</u>	<u>      </u>
Support staff**	<u>5</u>	<u>      </u>
**Includes secretaries, custodians and nurse		
Total number	<u>56</u>	<u>3</u>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers: 15 : 1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Daily student attendance	94 %	95 %	94 %	95 %	95 %
Daily teacher attendance	96 %	96 %	96 %	96 %	96 %
Teacher turnover rate	15 %***	4 %	2 %	3 %	0 %
Student dropout rate (middle/high)	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

\*\*\*Retirement and relocations

### **Part III - Summary**

Tradition, Pride, and Excellence—these three words which are found in our school logo capture the spirit of South Fayette. We are a community that has grown rapidly over the last 10 years but has never strayed from our mission “to cultivate ethical, responsible, contributing members in a global society.” Within the larger community of South Fayette School District stands South Fayette Middle School, an educational community focused on the unique needs of students in grades 5 through 8. Keenly aware of the amount of change that occurs in the preadolescent child between the ages of 10 and 15, our middle school community strives to provide experiences in academics, the arts, and athletics that focus on the special intellectual, psychological, emotional, and physical developmental stages of this age group.

A firm belief in teamwork is fundamental to the success of our middle school. Our school is organized into Grade Level teams, Foreign Language teams, Special Area teams, and Special Education teams. Each team functions both independently and interdependently to provide for the needs of our students. Grade Level teams meet daily to share instructional strategies, define core curriculum, collaborate with parents, discuss the social and emotional growth of the students, and analyze data, all with the goal of providing an environment tailored to the needs of each child. Special Area teams provide a rich array of courses aimed at satisfying the middle schoolers’ needs to explore and experience. Every year, each student experiences well-defined courses in music, technology education, robotics, art, consumer science, business technology, and physical education. Our middle school Fine Arts program was the proud recipient of the prestigious Charles Gray Award for 2005, an award given to the one school in Allegheny County which provides the most comprehensive Fine Arts program for their students. Foreign Language instruction is a requirement for all middle schoolers every year. The goal of the Foreign Language team is to have every student accomplish first year proficiency before they leave middle school. Special Education teams meet together, as well as with grade level teams, to focus on the needs of this special population. Even as these teams have unique individual goals, they also come together to design and facilitate a coherent program of studies that focuses upon the development of the whole child.

One of our main goals over the past two years has been to develop an Adolescent Literacy program throughout our middle school. Based on the belief that children need to have strong reading skills in order to be successful in any area of the curriculum, our entire staff has worked together to implement strategies that support proficiency in reading and writing. During the first year of this initiative, reading coaches from the Intermediate Unit worked with our Language Arts teachers to incorporate successful instructional strategies into lesson planning and to refine the curriculum to encompass comprehensive literacy skills. The second year of the initiative brought all staff into monthly sessions on reading strategies, and we began to see Literature Circles, Word Walls, and other focused reading tools springing up in every room from Consumer Science to Physical Education to Social Studies and Science.

When working with middle school-aged youth, frequent communication with parents is critical. To this end South Fayette Middle School utilizes a wide variety of communication tools. Parent Connect, a software program, enables parents to view their student’s grades, absences, and discipline reports online. Middle school teachers record homework daily on the telephone Homework Hotline, and all students are given a Student Planner courtesy of the Middle School Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Teachers instruct the students in the use of their planner as their daily agenda. Our parent group (PAC) meets monthly with the school administration to discuss issues relevant to middle school life. The middle school principal writes a monthly newsletter which is mailed to each student’s home and is also emailed to those who have signed-up for this online service. Interim Reports of student grades with teacher comments are mailed in the middle of each grading period, and teachers hold parent conferences during team meetings on a frequent basis. Our middle school web site and parent email list help to keep parents only a click away from all of the news of the day. The entire middle school community comes together annually at the Celebration of Excellence. Through these various sources of communication parents and the wider community of South Fayette become partners in the education of their middle schoolers.

## **Part IV - Indicators of Academic Success**

### **1. Assessment Results:**

South Fayette Middle School is a unique entity in regard to the “traditional” definition of what grades comprise a middle school. Most middle schools include grades 6 through 8. Our school also includes students in grade 5. This make-up of grade levels encompasses two of the three benchmark years that are measured through the statewide assessment system known as the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). This annual measurement system was developed to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The PSSA measures student performance at four levels: “Below Basic”, “Basic”, “Proficient”, and “Advanced”. A student’s performance is indicated by their numerical score, which transfers into one of the four levels. The students’ overall performances become a measure of the effectiveness of the instructional programs in the school. The PSSA provides a means of measuring the performance levels of its schools across the state based on the same criteria. As per NCLB, each public school is required to administer tests and report their findings to their constituents yearly. Performance level descriptors and any additional information on the PSSA can be found on the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s website at [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us).

The students in the South Fayette Middle School exceeded the state averages in all areas of Reading and Mathematics. In Reading, 90% of our 5<sup>th</sup> grade students scored at or above the “proficient” level according to the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in 2004-2005 as compared to 64% for the state. Of this total, 40% scored at the “advanced” level. In Mathematics, 97% of our 5<sup>th</sup> grade students scored at or above the “proficient” level on the same test in 2004-2005 as compared to 69% for the state. Of this total, 71% scored at the “advanced” level. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade the scores continue to exceed the state average. In Reading, 90% of the students scored at or above the “proficient” level as compared to 64% for the state. Of this total, 72% scored in the “advanced” level. In Mathematics, 90% of the students scored at or above the “proficient” level as compared to 63% in the state. Of this total, 71% scored in the “advanced” level. The scores from the 2005 school year reinforce the school’s commitment toward continuous achievement.

Our continued efforts to move our students into the “advanced” range have increased as well. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade Reading, we have increased the percentage of students in the “advanced” level from 23% in 2000 to 40% in 2005. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics scores increased from 30% in the “advanced” level in 2000 to 71% in 2005. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade scores reflect this same trend. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading scores increased from 35% in the “advanced” level in 2000 to 72% in 2005. In Mathematics, the 8<sup>th</sup> graders increased from 33% in 2000 in the “advanced” level to 71% in 2005. The numbers of students moving into the “advanced” level from 2000 to 2005 make us very proud!

When there are a certain number of students enrolled in a particular school, the PSSA also looks at subgroups. According to Pennsylvania’s criteria, South Fayette Middle School has a subgroup of economically disadvantaged students in grades 5 and 8. The scores of both subgroups exceeded the state average as well. In Reading, 69% of the students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 90% of the students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade scored at or above the “proficient” level in this subgroup. In Mathematics, 94% of the students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 90% of the students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade scored at or above the “proficient” level in this subgroup. This reflects the superior efforts of the staff in providing a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students.

The mission of the South Fayette Middle School is to provide a positive learning experience for the students through a rigorous educational program that meets the needs of its students. The structure of teaming and involving staff outside of the core curriculum to enhance instruction has provided our

students the opportunities to be highly successful as indicated in our yearly scores. Our students have been able to exceed the yearly minimums set by the Department of Education through the success of our faculty and the belief that academic excellence is attainable for all students. We are proud of our efforts, however, our job is not done! We will continue to review our data to ensure that all students reach “proficiency” while making sure that our “proficient” students move toward “advanced”.

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

South Fayette Middle School has embraced the importance of data in guiding its instructional program. Data gathering is an on-going process that is utilized throughout the year. Throughout the course of each school year the faculty is in-serviced on the findings of the various assessments that are administered to the students. This information is disaggregated and presented as a means of examining areas that may need strengthening in the curriculum.

During each new school year, in-service time is provided to review the scores of the past school year’s assessment data. State assessment (PSSA) and standardized test (Terra-Nova) data are evaluated. To examine student achievement, this information is presented to the staff by the Assistant Superintendent and the building principals. Along with student achievement, the middle school staff utilizes another data tool, the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS). PVAAS looks at a child’s academic “progress” over time using the achievement scores on the PSSA and Terra-Nova. We believe that each child is entitled to a year’s growth regardless of their demographic background or ability. PVAAS data provides relevant information that addresses the needs of all students in the area of academic progress. This data allows our teachers to reflect on the curriculum to make sure all students’ academic needs are being met.

Data collection continues throughout the school year in the middle school. We use a variety of instructional tools, besides classroom tests, to gather information and realign instruction to meet the needs of the students. We have incorporated technology in the form of *Princeton Review*. This allows teachers to individualize instruction in specific areas that students can complete at home through the internet. This remediation provides individual practice that is measured and monitored by the teacher. For students that scored at the “basic” or “below basic” level, we provide after school tutoring classes twice a week. This added instruction focuses on the areas of weakness as determined from the data on the state assessment reports. We have incorporated the *4Sight Benchmark* testing program which was developed by Johns-Hopkins University as another data gathering component to assist students in meeting success on the state assessments. These tests are given at periodic times throughout the year to measure student performance in Reading and Mathematics. These tests are aligned to the state standards and provide useful information that teachers can use to refocus instruction. Support services are available in the form of an Instructional Support teacher who gathers data, then forms an intervention team consisting of teachers, the guidance counselor, the child’s parents, and administration, to assist students academically.

Data collection is an integral part of the South Fayette Middle School. This information is used for the purpose of realigning the curriculum to allow students to become more successful. We value the importance data provides. We have seen progress through the performance levels of our students. We will continue to utilize data to monitor and adjust our instruction so that all students can reach the levels of proficiency needed for success.



### **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

South Fayette Middle School believes in the importance of communication. We believe that communication is an integral part of any successful program. We provide information to both the parents of the students and the entire community through a variety of means. Both the administration and the teachers share information with their constituents throughout the year.

All residents of the District can access information pertaining to the school through South Fayette School District's web page. This data highlights achievements and provides residents of South Fayette with pertinent information regarding student and district performance. Information is also provided through a district-wide newsletter that is mailed to each resident. Highlights of students' achievements in the form of awards, academic success, and accomplishments are provided. A district-wide "report card" measuring the academic performance of the district is mailed each year. It provides the residents with a thorough understanding of how well our schools are performing as compared to other schools throughout the state.

Teachers provide clear expectations to students and parents regarding instruction and achievement through a variety of methods. Rubrics and classroom guidelines are shared with both students and parents. Teachers also invite parents to attend scheduled conferences to discuss their child's performance. Parents are also invited to attend conferences throughout the year during daily team meeting times. The staff utilizes 4 ½ week interim reports to communicate student achievement as well as the quarterly report card. Student information can be viewed daily through *Parent Connect*, a web-based program offered by the middle school to inform parents of their child's academic achievement, their daily attendance, and any behavior issues that may affect student performance.

The administration is also involved in communicating student achievement. The Parent Advisory Council meets the first Wednesday of each month. This allows the administration the opportunity to showcase areas of the curriculum to parents, present school-wide student data and address any concerns relating to the middle school. The building principal also sends out a monthly newsletter communicating the many accomplishments of the students and staff. All state-wide testing information is sent to each parent regarding their child's performance on the state assessment.

We value the importance of communicating to parents and the community. We will continue to provide information relevant to student and school performance as we maintain the academic excellence that is the culture of the South Fayette Middle School.

### **4. Sharing Success:**

South Fayette Middle School's doors are open for teachers and administrators to observe the instruction that takes place in the classrooms. Our teachers and administrators have presented staff development workshops on best practices throughout the state. We presently have a middle school teacher on loan to ASSET, Inc., an organization that provides professional development, hands-on teaching strategies, and inquiry training to science teachers throughout the Pittsburgh area. She is aligning middle level science instruction to match the state assessment anchors and she is providing staff development training to middle school teachers that focuses on effective hands-on, inquiry based instructional strategies. Walk-throughs by teachers and administrators from other districts are not uncommon in our building. Recently, members of the Principal's Academy accompanied our administrators on walk-throughs in the middle school. This allowed them to see first hand the instructional strategies used by the teachers. The information gained was then shared county-wide through the principal's consortium. Leadership Pittsburgh, a private consortium of business members, has visited our school to see how academic excellence is achieved. The Allegheny Conference, a regional committee comprised of prominent members in private industry, public health, research, and government, invited our Superintendent to share,

county-wide, the successes we have achieved. We were the only educational entity to be invited to speak at the conference. South Fayette Middle School is showcased weekly in the local newspaper. We are an integral part of *S.F. and Neighbors*, a local magazine that highlights business, community and educational accomplishments, which are shared throughout the region.

South Fayette Middle School believes in the value of excellence. Our mission is to educate all students with an engaging and rigorous curriculum. We also believe as educators that best practices should be shared. As we continue to provide academic excellence we will always open our doors to share the many positive and effective strategies that have allowed us to be nominated as a “Blue Ribbon” school.

## **Part V – Curriculum and Instruction**

### **1. Curriculum:**

The Program of Studies for South Fayette Middle School states, “A favorite quote of ours comes from Henry David Thoreau who once said ‘It is not enough to be busy; the question is what are we busy about?’ Our goal is to provide a learning environment that assures our students are “busy” achieving success in a challenging curriculum.” Since we are a school consisting of grades 5 through 8, this rigorous curriculum in each discipline is designed with a scope and sequence which spirals skill development through each grade level, addressing the PA Academic Standards at each level. This curriculum includes demanding courses for all students in the following subject areas:

**Language Arts** – Courses at each grade level focus on all aspects of Adolescent Literacy, using the English language to communicate through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language Arts integrates the linguistic elements of vocabulary, grammar and usage, writing, and literature. Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in reading comprehension, interpretation of literature, the writing process, and public speaking.

**Mathematics** –In all grade levels, math courses are designed to make students more powerful problem solvers, develop critical thinking and reasoning skills, and to solidify their ability to perform mathematical operations. Students can advance from basic 5<sup>th</sup> Grade math to Honors Geometry on their journey through middle school, beginning Algebra 2 in high school.

**Science** – All science courses are developed to foster hands-on, inquiry based learning. Students build relationships among Physical Science, Life Science, Environmental Science, and Earth and Space Science as they begin to see themselves as problem-solvers who apply their knowledge to real world experiences.

**Social Sciences** – From the study of Ancient Civilizations and the study of American History, our students gain an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures and peoples. Students are assessed on their understanding of concepts and critical thinking rather than memorization of material. Frequent opportunities to develop and utilized written and oral communications skills are provided as Adolescent Literacy is integrated with Social Sciences.

**Foreign Language** – Middle school students select to study French, Spanish, or German as they enter 5<sup>th</sup> Grade. They continue the study of this language throughout their 4 years as middle schoolers, allowing them to enter high school at an advanced level. Courses emphasize reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the target language as well as cultural awareness and appreciation.

**Industrial Technology** – All middle schoolers experience courses in robotics, automation, manufacturing through woodworking, technical drawing and design, and enterprise and marketing. Each course has as its foundation the development of creative solutions to real-world problems as a part of a team.

**Music** – Students are required to take music all four years. These courses include instruction in music theory, Orff instrumentation, MIE electronic keyboarding, music appreciation, and choral performance. Band instruction begins in grade 5 and continues throughout middle school. Opportunities for performance are provided through choral concerts, band concerts, and the production of an exceptionally professional middle school musical.

**Art** – Art courses are taken by all students every year in middle school. The development of the visual arts through a variety of mediums is taught, and our school is alive with student “art exhibits” adorning our hallways at all times throughout the year. School offices have framed student art on the walls which changes each month to the delight of young artists!

**Business Technology** – Students begin in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade with a formal course in Power Point, progressing to courses in keyboarding skills and publishing in Grade 6 and 7. They progress to a full year core course in Microsoft Word in Grade 8. This course requires students to compose, type, print letters and documents, edit documents with various page set up requirements, format characters, import graphics, develop and produce interdisciplinary projects, and a variety of other tasks which demonstrate proficiency in word processing skills prior to entering high school.

Physical Education/Health - Courses are aimed at educating students to acquire and use the knowledge and skills necessary to promote a state of complete physical, mental, and emotional well-being, to understand wellness, and promote good health habits throughout life. Students swim, develop manipulative skills, and participate in a variety of team sports.

Family and Consumer Science – Middle schoolers study Sewing and Laundry, Child Care and Community Responsibilities, Resource Management and Life Skills, Food and Nutrition, and Consumerism and Money Management in an effort to provide them with everyday living skills necessary for self-help and to be a productive member of their community. Students apply many of the skills learned in this class through operation of their own School Store.

## **2. Reading/English:**

The faculty of South Fayette Middle School is committed to the belief that fluent reading and comprehension are keys to learning in all areas. This commitment is evidenced by the structure of our schedule in which Language Arts is allotted 80 minutes each day in grades 5, 6, and 7 and 60-minute blocks in grade 8, as opposed to the usual 45 minute period. Using this extended time structure, teachers develop lessons which integrate reading skills (phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) with the writing process and the art of public speaking, focusing students on the entire Language Arts continuum. The curriculum is articulated across all grade levels to include all areas of the PA Standards: learning to read independently; reading critically in all content areas; reading, analyzing and interpreting literature, developing a variety of written responses to literature; developing listening and thinking skills; and learning to do research.

Teachers have had extensive Staff Development sessions on differentiating instruction to engage all students and facilitate learning for all. Pre, during, and post literacy strategies set a purpose for learning, engage the students in explicit reading and writing strategies, and then move the student beyond the text to critical thinking and application of concepts. Middle schoolers experience Literature Circles, Writing Workshops, Readers' Theatre, development of research projects, quarterly speeches, and team projects which capture their interest while developing their skills. Two years of Staff Development have also been focused on the need to bring Adolescent Literacy into all areas of the curriculum. "Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum" is essential to all core and special area subjects in our middle school. The entire middle school staff is engaged in creating lessons and classroom environments that enhance literacy.

After-school tutoring programs in reading are taught twice a week for students of all four grade levels to provide small-group, individualize reading instruction. Data from standardized testing, classroom performance and teacher observations is collected and analyzed to identify students in need of this remediation. Additionally, students who are identified as struggling readers at the end of Grade 5 are placed into a modified curriculum classroom in which instruction in the core reading skills is intensified while students are still exposed to the literature and novels studied in the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade curriculum. The teacher in this classroom has been extensively trained by Literacy Coaches from the Intermediate Unit Reading Achievement Center. These coaches also develop curriculum and instructional delivery methods two full days each quarter with each grade level Language Arts teacher and observe their classrooms to assure that strategies are being carried out effectively.

## **3. Mathematics:**

The mathematics curriculum of South Fayette Middle School is very focused. This focus, along with a curriculum aligned carefully with the Standards and a judicious use of tools such as Homeroom.com and Cognitive Tutor, is most likely what has brought us to score first in the state of PA on the PSSA 5<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics test. Math instruction, as with Language Arts instruction, is taught in an 80-minute block of time each day in grade 5, 6, and 7 and 60-minute blocks in grade 8. Students who perform well are advanced in an aggressive curriculum which enables them to complete Honors

Geometry requirements while still in middle school. This curriculum facilitates their advancement through AP Calculus 2 by the end of Grade 12. Conversely, students who need additional help are assisted by an Instructional Support Teacher and provided tutoring both during the school day and in an after-school program.

Grade 5 mathematics reviews, reinforces and introduces some more advanced computational skills using whole numbers in the four computational areas. Decimals and fractions are introduced; basic concepts of geometry, measurement, graphing, patterns, statistics, and probability are developed. In each of these areas strategies are developed to instill in the students a problem-solving approach and to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills. In the spring of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, teachers analyze data to determine the students who need to advance at a more rapid pace. These students are enrolled in Transition Mathematics in grade 6, skipping the traditional 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math course. However, to assure that these students have mastered the basic skills at a high level, the Enrichment teacher schedules meetings with them 3 days a week during the 6<sup>th</sup> grade year to reinforce basic skills in fractions, decimals, and percentages.

Sixth Grade mathematics is designed to help students become more powerful problems solvers and to solidify their ability to perform the fundamental operations of math. Teachers develop lessons that incorporate decision-making skills, critical thinking skills, and reasoning skills interwoven with math processes. Those students previously identified as in need of a faster paced curriculum, are enrolled in Transition Math class in grade 6. This is also the course offering for Grade 7 students.

Transition Mathematics weaves three themes – applied arithmetic, pre-algebra, and pre-geometry. Variables are used as pattern generalizers, abbreviations in formulas and as represented on the number line and graphed on the coordinate plane. Basic arithmetic and algebraic skills are connected to corresponding geometry topics. Students who have completed Transition Math in Grade 6 are enrolled in Algebra I in Grade 7.

All middle schoolers are required to take Algebra I in grade 8. Those who have completed Algebra I in Grade 7 advance to Honors Geometry in Grade 8. The Algebra I course utilizes text-based instruction and technology-based instruction through the use of Cognitive Tutor software. Honors Geometry students learn the concepts of geometry while also being expected to explore, research, evaluate, and apply these concepts using various strategies and technologies.

#### **4. Instructional Methods:**

Teachers at South Fayette Middle School are keenly aware of the characteristics of the middle school age group. First you must capture their attention if indeed you want to teach them! To this end, our staff has been thoroughly in-serviced on both the needs of the pre-adolescent and the instructional methods that will foster learning among this group. This professional development was intensified when we made the decision to teach core subjects in a larger block of time, thus making it essential that instructional methods vary often during the lesson.

A typical 80-minute lesson will find the teacher utilizing many different methodologies. The lesson will begin with a warm-up activity which focuses the student to the topic at hand. This warm-up is often followed by direct instruction on the targeted skill in which the teacher utilizes Power Point demonstrations, interaction with Web sites using Smart Board technology, interactive notes posted on overhead television screens, and other similar strategies to present information. Once presented, the information needs to be manipulated, dissected, and eventually “owned” by the students. Therefore, the classroom then becomes alive with structured cooperative learning involving hands-on tasks that serve to practice and reinforce the skill taught during direct instruction. Student learning involves manipulatives, lab experiences, inquiry-based learning, and technology tasks. Students are adept at web quests, using Smart Boards, and especially working as part of a team to learn and to solve problems. Teachers have designed tiered learning experiences in which students challenge themselves to complete the increasingly difficult levels of learning. They have also designed remediation and enrichment materials to meet the needs of each child.

Teachers are cognizant of the individual learning styles of the students. Often lesson design incorporates these various learning styles into the production of distinctly different products as evidence of their learning. Lessons capture the attention of the visual learner, the auditory learner, the kinesthetic learner as teachers in South Fayette Middle School know that students need to be an integral part of their own learning.

## **5. Professional Development:**

South Fayette School District embraces the value of professional development, and professional development is a key factor in developing the yearly school calendar. The year begins with new teachers participating in 5 days of Induction before the rest of the staff arrives. This Induction encompasses not only learning District policies and procedures but also instruction in classroom management strategies, good lesson design, and key instructional strategies. When the veteran staff arrives, the District kicks off the year with 3 Staff Development days that focus on a specific Professional Development initiative that is District wide. Just as assessment drives instruction in the classroom, assessment also drives the professional development program. The current District initiative is a focus on Literacy which encompasses curriculum development and instructional methodologies from K – 12 in all disciplines. Coupled with this District wide initiative is always a focus on what technologies can be utilized to improve instruction. This year staff has been learning video streaming to enhance their Power Point presentations, making these presentations even more relevant and appealing to the student learners.

During the course of the year, one day each month is set aside as a Late Start Day. Student arrive 2-hours later than usual but their teachers arrive ½ hour earlier than usual. This allows for 2 ½ hours of Professional Development to occur each month. Our middle school has utilized a majority of this time to work together as a building on the Adolescent Literacy initiative. A literacy coach conducted large-group and small-group meetings to teach the staff appropriate strategies for building a culture that enhances literacy in each classroom and discipline. This coach then visits the classrooms during the month to observe the teachers using the new strategies. Also during this time our middle school teachers are scheduled to work in the computer labs with technology trainers who assist them in the integration of video into presentations. Middle school teachers have also spent time this year revisiting the National Middle School Association Belief Statements as set forth in their publication [This We Believe...](#). We are doing this as a part of a self-study whereby we examine our school structure and curriculum to assure that it is serving the needs of our very special population - middle schoolers.

Besides these most recent initiatives, South Fayette School District has provided Professional Development on topics such as Differentiating Instruction, the Writing Process, Curriculum Development and Lesson Design, and many other valuable topics. Although our teachers use various methodologies, they collaborate during team meetings and daily Staff Development time to update Curriculum Binders to assure that alignment with Standards is current, major assessments are the same among teachers, and all students are receiving instruction on the same skills in each and every classroom. Professional Development is incorporated into the life of our District and has as its focus making an impact on student achievement.

## **PART VII – ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

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### **STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS**

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a mandated state assessment in reading and mathematics. Student scores are reported as the percentage of students tested whose performance was Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. These categories are defined as follows:

Advanced-Superior academic performance indicating an in-depth understanding and exemplary display of the skills included in Pennsylvania's Academic Standards.

Proficient-Satisfactory academic performance indicating a solid understanding and adequate display of the skills included in Pennsylvania's Academic Standards.

Basic-Marginal academic performance work approaching, but not yet reaching, satisfactory performance. Performance indicates a partial understanding and limited display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania's Academic Standards, and the student may need additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient level.

Below Basic-Inadequate academic performance that indicates little understanding and minimal display of the skills included in Pennsylvania's Academic Content Standards. There is a major need for additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient level.

# No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon School

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

Grade 5 – Math

Edition/Publication Years 2000 – 2005

Publisher: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Testing Month	April	March	March	April	March
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	97	93	83	79	68
% At the Advanced Level	71	75	60	50	30
Number of Students Tested	131	141	135	140	125
Percent of Total Students Tested	100	100	98	99	100
Number of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	1	0
Percent of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	1	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES*</b>					
<b>1. Special Needs - Students with IEP's</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	67	63	38	48	13
% At the Advanced Performance Level	50	27	23	0	0
Number of Students Tested	6*	11	13	6*	8*
<b>2. Economically Disadvantaged</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	94	72	44	0	47
% At the Advanced Performance Level	44	36	25	0	18
Number of Students Tested	16	14	16	0	17
<b>3. White</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	97	94	85	81	67
% At the Advanced Performance Level	72	78	61	51	30
Number of Students Tested	125	130	124	130	120
Number of Students <b>Not</b> Tested	0	0	3	2	0

\*The Pennsylvania Department of Education disaggregates data only if the subgroup equals or exceeds 10 students. The above three subgroups exceed this number.



# No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon School

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

Grade 5 – Reading

Edition/Publication Years 2000 – 2005

Publisher: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Testing Month	April	March	March	April	March
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	90	82	85	78	67
% At the Advanced Level	40	52	59	32	23
Number of Students Tested	131	141	135	140	125
Percent of Total Students Tested	100	100	99	99	99
Number of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	1	0
Percent of Students Alternatively Assessed	0	0	0	1	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES*</b>					
<b>1. Special Needs - Students with IEP's</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	50	27	15	0	0
% At the Advanced Performance Level	17	9	8	0	0
Number of Students Tested	6*	11	13	6*	7*
<b>2. Economically Disadvantaged</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	69	57	63	0	47
% At the Advanced Performance Level	6	21	19	0	18
Number of Students Tested	16	14	16	0	17
<b>3. White</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	91	85	86	79	66
% At the Advanced Performance Level	41	55	58	33	24
Number of Students Tested	125	130	125	130	119
Number of Students <b>Not</b> Tested	0	0	1	2	1

\*The Pennsylvania Department of Education disaggregates data only if the group equals or exceeds 10 students. The above three subgroups exceed this number.

# No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon School

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

Grade 8 – Math

Edition/Publication Years 2000 – 2005

Publisher: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Testing Month	April	March	March	April	March
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	90	81	79	81	78
% At the Advanced Level	71	43	40	34	33
Number of Students Tested	155	128	157	117	115
Percent of Total Students Tested	100	100	100	97	99
Number of Students Alternatively Assessed	2	0	0	0	0
Percent of Students Alternatively Assessed	1	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES*</b>					
<b>1. Special Needs - Students with IEP's</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	33	7	17	30	0
% At the Advanced Performance Level	20	0	0	0	0
Number of Students Tested	15	14	18	10	3*
<b>2. Economically Disadvantaged</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	90	67	50	0	91
% At the Advanced Performance Level	65	25	25	0	18
Number of Students Tested	20	12	8*	0	11
<b>3. White</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	91	81	81	81	80
% At the Advanced Performance Level	72	42	41	35	35
Number of Students Tested	149	123	143	109	104
Number of Students <b>Not</b> Tested	0	0	0	4	1

\*The Pennsylvania Department of Education disaggregates data only if the group equals or exceeds 10 students. The above subgroups exceed this number.

# No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon School

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

Grade 8 – Reading

Edition/Publication Years 2000 – 2005

Publisher: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Testing Month	April	March	March	April	March
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	90	88	84	85	83
% At the Advanced Level	72	50	41	36	35
Number of Students Tested	155	128	157	117	115
Percent of Total Students Tested	100	100	100	96	99
Number of Students Alternatively Assessed	2	0	0	0	0
Percent of Students Alternatively Assessed	1	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES*</b>					
<b>1. Special Needs - Students with IEP's</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	20	36	18	40	0
% At the Advanced Performance Level	13	7	0	0	0
Number of Students Tested	15	14	18	10	3*
<b>2. Economically Disadvantaged</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	90	67	63	0	73
% At the Advanced Performance Level	70	42	13	0	36
Number of Students Tested	20	12	8*	0	11
<b>3. White</b>					
% Proficient or Advanced Level	90	89	86	85	85
% At the Advanced Performance Level	74	50	42	36	38
Number of Students Tested	149	123	143	109	105
Number of Students <b>Not</b> Tested	0	0	0	4	1

\*The Pennsylvania Department of Education disaggregates data only if the group equals or exceeds 10 students. The above three subgroups exceed this number.